

## **Lecturers' Questions and Students' Responses in English Classroom Interaction**

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### **Abstract**

*Questioning is an common technique employed by the lecturers to maintain the classroom interaction. This article is the report of the research that tries to answer research problems, namely: (1) What types of questions do the English lecturers use in their classroom? and (2) How appropriate are the students' responses to the lecturers' questions?*

*The research method which was applied in this study is descriptive qualitative. The data were taken from the transcriptions of the classroom interaction which was focused on types of lecturers' questions and students' responses in the English classroom. The respondents were four lecturers who taught 'speaking' at four classes which consist of twenty students at second semester in each classroom. Transcribing the data, categorizing the types of questions, evaluating appropriateness were the techniques which were used to analyze the data.*

*The results show that the types of lectures' question which were used in the process of teaching and learning involved display questions, divergent questions, convergent questions, procedural questions, clarification check, confirmation check, comprehension check, and question tag. The total questions used were 583 questions. Most of students responded lecturers' question appropriately.*

*Finally, applying effective questioning techniques by choosing types of questions properly in order to make the students understand the materials learned is the suggestion of this research.*

**Keywords:** *Lecturers' Questions and Students' Responses.*

### **Introduction**

There are so many factors that influence the process of teaching and learning to be successful in the university. One of them is the interaction between the lecturer and the students. The lecturer's ability for designing and leading the interactions in the classroom is needed to achieve the objective of the study. If the teacher fails in classroom interactions, it may cause misunderstanding between him and the learners (Nunan, 1991:37). Consequently, the lecturer can not succeed the process of teaching and learning. One of the crucial things in interactions in English classroom that the writer investigates is lecturer's talk. The writer tends to

use lecturer's talk to replace teacher's talk because he does a research in the university. The lecturer's talk is not only very important for organising the interactions in English classroom but it is also probably the major source of comprehensible target language input. Brown, (2001: 165) states that talk dominates the classroom. There are teacher's talk and students' talk in classroom. According to Ned Flanders (1970: 41), there are ten categories of lecturers' talk. They are called FIAC, which stands for the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories. Similar to FIAC system, asking a question is one of the functional features of lecturers' talk. It has been identified as a critical part of lecturers' work in the process of teaching and learning. A questioning is a common technique employed by the lecturers to maintain the classroom interaction. There are so many advantages for using the lecturer's questions in variety of educational purposes, such as diagnosing students' ability, leading creative thinking, probing students' thought process, motivating and assessing students' knowledge to achieve the objective of the study. Referring to the illustration above, the writer is interested to do a research entitled '*Lecturers' Questions and Students' Responses in English Classroom Interaction*' and he tries to answer the research questions which involve: (1) What types of questions do the English lecturers use in their classroom?, and (2) How appropriate are the students' responses to the lecturers' questions? Hopefully, this study can give contribution to the process of teaching and learning in English classroom.

#### Research Method

In this research, the writer applied descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the lecturer's questions and students' responses in English classroom. The aim of descriptive research is to examine events or phenomenon (Mc Millan and Schumacker in marriam 1988: 77). The data of this research was taken from the transcription of the classroom interaction which was focused on lecturers' questions and students' responses in the transactional and interpersonal conversation interactions in the English classroom at the second semester students of the English Education Department of Teacher Training and Educational Faculty of Muria Kudus University in the academic year of 2010/2011. The lecturers who teach speaking were the respondents of this research. Exactly, there were four lecturers which had various teaching experiences and fourth classes which consisted of twenty students at second semester in each classroom.

The method of data collection involved determining the class as the setting of the study, doing observation, recording and documentation. In *determining* the class, the writer fulfilled some administrative procedures including getting permission of the Head of English Education Department in order to collect the data. An *observation* here means collecting valid data to find out deeply about the lecturers – students interaction in English classroom, especially the focus was on the types of questions used by the lecturers and the students' responses to the lecturers' questions. Bogdan R. And Biklen (1982: 79) state that through observation the researcher learns about behaviors and the meaning attach to those behaviors. In doing *video recording*, the writer asked his friend to do it as he couldn't do it by himself. While his friend was doing recording, he was also in the class to make filed notes. To make the valid data, the writer applied triangulation for the collected data as Denzim (1970: 472 in Leo Van Lier 1998: 13) said that many researchers advocate the use of triangulation. The writer used investigation triangulation in which he invited another observer to involve him in the observation and methodological triangulation in which the different methods such as observation, analysis of transcript was used. The concept of reliability in this study was associated with consistency in coding and categorization of data, as well as in interpretation of meanings.



The writer transcribed, selected, categorized, and interpreted the data to be analyzed. A transcribing was a process of representing the talk or speech event in written form. The conversation on the talk was transcribed in a way that was faithful and accessible to discourse study. A selecting was the step to select all of the lecturers' questions and the students' responses, and re-write them on a separate sheet of paper. The purpose of selection was to make the analysis easier. For categorizing the types of questions, the writer used the theory of some experts such as Long and Sato as cited in Chaudron (1988: 127) and Nunan (1991, 194); Nunan, (1989: 194); Chaudron C, (1988: 127) and etc. There are thirteen categories of lecturers' questions, namely: (1) display question, (2) referential questions, (3) divergent questions, (4) Convergent question, (5) procedural question, (6) closed question, (7) open question, (8) clarification requests, (9) confirmation checks, (10) comprehension check, (11) Yes-No question, (12) WH-word question, and (13) question tag. An Interpretation was the last step for analyzing the data. The Interpretation was done to find out the questions of this study: (1) What types of questions do the English lecturers use in their classroom?, and (2) How appropriate are the students' responses to the lecturers' questions?

#### Finding and Discussion

The subject of this research was four lecturers who taught speaking class for second semester of student in English Department of Muria Kudus University in the academic years 2010/2011. The observation was conducted four times during one two weeks of July 2011. The duration of the observation depended on each of the lecturers' schedules and their organization of the classroom. The first observation was conducted in the class of lecturer A. The topic was presenting tips to overcome problems. In the observed classroom of lecturer B, the students had a role play in some groups. In the observed classroom of lecturer C, the students reported their speaking which were recorded by using cell phone. Then the lecturer extended by giving some questions to some students about describing a place. The last observation, in lecturer D, the students were taught about a giving direction and describing places.

#### The Type of Questions Used in the Classroom

To describe the types of questions which were asked by the lecturers during the teaching and learning process in details, the writer classified them into a table of questions. The following is Table 1 which describes the frequency of type of questions which were asked in the process of teaching and learning.

Table 1. Frequency of Type of Questions and the Percentage in the Total Summary

Lec- turer	Display		Divergent		Convergent		Procedural		Clarification		Confirmation		Comprehension		Question tags	
	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%
A	41	38.7	8	7.55	39	36.8	2	1.89	10	9.43	5	4.72	1	0.94	0	0
B	41	18.4	56	25.1	97	43.5	7	3.14	0	0	19	8.52	3	1.35	0	0
C	10	8.13	28	22.8	52	42.3	2	1.63	3	2.44	22	17.9	6	4.88	0	0
D	17	13	11	8.4	81	61.8	4	3.05	0	0	10	7.63	6	4.58	2	1.53
Total	109		103		269		15		13		56		16		2	

From the table above, it is clear that there are eight types of lecturers' questions which were delivered by the lecturers in the process of teaching and learning. Each lecturer tends to ask

the students by using different types of questions. In observed classroom of the lecturer A, the writer can arrange the type of questions which were asked by her to the students, namely: display questions, convergent questions, clarification checks, divergent questions, confirmation checks, procedural questions, and comprehension check. In observed classroom of the lecturer B, the writer finds that she tended to ask convergent questions, divergent questions, and display questions to the students. She rarely asked the students by using confirmation checks, procedural questions, and comprehension checks. The third observed classroom that the writer investigated was the classroom of lecturer C. In his teaching, he often asked convergent questions, divergent questions and confirmation checks to the students. He rarely delivered display questions, comprehension checks, clarification checks, and procedural questions to the students. He didn't deliver question tags to the students in the process of teaching and learning. The lecturer D rarely asked display questions, divergent questions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, procedural questions and question tags in his classroom. He often asked the students by delivering convergent questions.

The following is the example of a display question excerpt which is taken from lecturer A's class:

Turn Speaker:

21 L : Attendance, OK. Is it attendance?

22 S : Yes.

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that the lecturer asked *display* question to ask the students. Actually the lecturer knows the answer and she requires a short or even one word answer. Turn 22 shows that the student is able to answer the questions of the lecturer appropriately.

Below is an example of a divergent question excerpt which is taken from lecturer B's class:

Turn Speaker:

313 L : Why don't you have explanation related with your problem?

314 S : *Find, maybe the nervous makes me confused. Confused to explain my problem. My problem is how to manage time and usually I often late come to campus because Sometimes I have to remain my motorcycle so fast to get, to take here, but sometimes I feel horrible....frighten I mean, on the road because so many motorcycle when I go to campus. And then sometimes I saw an accident, so that why make me scared...so..*

The excerpt shows that the lecturer asked the students by delivering a *divergent* question to find the students' reason. In this stage, the lecturer encourages the students to use the higher-level of thinking in responding the question. The lecturer needs the reason why the student does not explain the problem. Finally she knows the reason after the students explain it in detail.

### The Appropriateness of the Students' Responses to the Lecturers' Questions

To find out the appropriateness of the students' responses toward the lecturers' questions, the writer presents the Distribution of Students' Responses to each Type of Lecturers' Questions in appendix 1. Appendix 2 tells about Types of Questions which are Responded Appropriately. Appendix 3 tells about The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Responses to lecturer's Questions. The result of the study shows that there are two kinds of students'



responses namely: verbal response and non verbal response as cited in appendix 1. Verbal responses consist of short answer, long answer, and asking. The total numbers of responses was 594, for short answer was 382 or 64,31%, for long answer was 118 or 19,9%, for asking was 22 or 3,7% and for silence was 72 or 12,1%. The numbers of responses show us that the total numbers of lecturers' questions (583), 522 were responded positively and the rest were not responded positively.

Appendix 3 shows that the students' responses can be either appropriate or in appropriate. For each lecturer has different appropriateness of responses because of several factors, for instance the students' understanding the questions or the materials and the level of difficulty of the questions or the materials. The total questions which were delivered by the lecturer were 583 questions. The total responses toward the questions were 594 responses because there were some questions that got more than one responses by different students. In other word, sometime one question was responded twice by different students. The presentations of appropriate responses were 72.61% and inappropriate responses were 27.39%. This number indicates that most of the students could answer the questions of lecturer appropriately.

Below is an appropriate response to display question which is taken from lecturer A's class:

Turn Speaker:

133 L : Yeah, trust. So, build the trust. Good. And so be honest. What is number two?

134 S : Giving best intention.

Turn 134 is the example of an appropriate response of the student to the display question. In this case, the lecturer tests the students' memory about some tips that have been learned. In this question, the student doesn't use a highest level of thinking. In the form of short answer, the student responds the question appropriately.

Below is an appropriate response to divergent question which is taken from lecturer A's class:

Turn Speaker:

15 L : Motivate. Can you explain that?

16 S : OK. So motivate is important too. I mean, motivate is a way the leader can motivate his friends. Motivate, I mean can ...a may be with a little force. May be to come forward in front of the class and etc

Turn 16 is the example of an appropriate response of the student to the divergent question. The lecturer asks the student to explain a motivation. Then, the student explains and elaborates the meaning of motivation in his way with the long answer.

Below is an example of an inappropriate response toward clarification check which is taken from A's class:

Turn Speaker:

197 L : Could you repeat that? I don't understand the last one.

198 S : Last one...a...one...

The excerpt above shows that the lecturer delivers a clarification check to the student. Unfortunately, the student doesn't understand what the lectures' mean. Here, the student gets difficulty to give an appropriate response because he cannot master the topic that he has learned or he cannot understand the question. Consequently, he responds the question inappropriately.

### Conclusion

Finally, the writer can conclude that the types of lecturers' questions which were delivered in the process of teaching and learning involved display questions, divergent questions, convergent questions, procedural questions, clarification check, confirmation check, comprehension check, and questions tag. The highest type of question which was delivered by the lecturers was convergent question and the less type of question which was delivered by them was questions tag.

Most of students responded lecturers' questions appropriately. Their responses were match with adjacency pair and using right grammatical that cause the lecturer developed the questions. There were four hundred and thirty two or seventy two point sixty one percent for appropriate responses, and one hundred and sixty three or twenty seventh point thirty nine percent for inappropriate responses.

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### Appendix 1

Table 1. The Distribution of Students' Responses to each Types of Lecturer's Questions

Question Types	Verbal			Non Verbal/ Silence	Positive responses
	Short answer	Long Answer	Asking		
1. Display Question					
Lecturer A	30	7	3	1	



Lecturer B	35	5	0	0	102
Lecturer C	8	1	0	0	
Lecturer D	12	4	0	1	
Total	85	17	3	2	
2. Divergent Questions					
Lecturer A	3	5	0	0	92
Lecturer B	19	32	2	6	
Lecturer C	10	15	5	0	
Lecturer D	6	2	0	4	
Total	38	54	7	10	
3. Convergent Questions					
Lecturer A	22	5	5	8	214
Lecturer B	73	8	4	11	
Lecturer C	44	8	0	2	
Lecturer D	47	7	0	29	
Total	186	28	9	50	
4. Procedural Questions					
Lecturer A	0	1	1	0	11
Lecturer B	5	2	0	0	
Lecturer C	2	0	0	0	
Lecturer D	1	0	0	4	
Total	8	3	1	4	
5. Clarification Questions					
Lecturer A	7	3	0	0	13
Lecturer B	0	0	0	0	
Lecturer C	2	1	0	0	
Lecturer D	0	0	0	0	
Total	9	4	0	0	
6. Confirmation Checks					
Lecturer A	2	2	1	0	52
Lecturer B	16	3	0	0	
Lecturer C	19	3	1	0	
Lecturer D	5	2	0	3	
Total	42	10	2	3	
7. Comprehension Checks					
Lecturer A	0	1	0	0	
Lecturer B	2	1	0	0	
Lecturer C	7	0	0	0	

Lecturer D	4	0	0	2	15
Total	13	2	0	2	
8. Question tags					1
Lecturer A	0	0	0	0	
Lecturer B	0	0	0	0	
Lecturer C	0	0	0	0	
Lecturer D	1	0	0	1	
Total	1	0	0	1	
total each responses	382	118	22	72	
total all responses		594			

## Appendix 2

Table 2. Types of Questions which are Responded Appropriately

Lecturers	Total of Lecturers' Questions	Types of Lecturer's Questions	Responses		Total	%
			Short Answer	Long Answer		
A	106	Display	30	7	37	34.9
		Divergent	3	5	8	7.55
		Convergent	22	5	27	25.5
		Procedural	0	1	1	0.94
		Clarification	7	3	10	9.43
		Confirmation	2	2	4	3.77
		Comprehension	0	1	1	0.94
		Question tags	0	0	0	0
B	223	Display	35	5	40	17.9
		Divergent	19	32	51	22.9
		Convergent	73	8	81	36.3
		Procedural	5	2	7	3.14
		Clarification	0	0	0	0
		Confirmation	16	3	19	8.52
		Comprehension	2	1	3	1.35
		Question tags	0	0	0	0
C	123	Display	8	1	9	7.32
		Divergent	10	15	25	20.3
		Convergent	44	8	52	42.3
		Procedural	2	0	2	1.63
		Clarification	2	1	3	2.44



D	131	Confirmation	19	3	22	17.9
		Comprehension	7	0	7	5.69
		Question tags	0	0	0	0
		Display	12	4	16	12.2
		Divergent	6	2	8	6.11
		Convergent	47	7	54	41.2
		Procedural	1	0	1	0.76
		Clarification	0	0	0	0
		Confirmation	5	2	7	5.34
		Comprehension	4	0	4	3.05
		Question tags	1	0	1	0.76

Appendix 3

Table 3. The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Responses to Lecturer's Questions

Lecturers	Number of Lecturer's Questions	Students' Responses			
		Appropriate		Inappropriate	
		N	%	N	%
	106	71	66,98	36	33.96
	223	177	79,37	47	21.08
	123	98	79,67	31	25.20
	131	86	65,65	49	37.40
tal	583	432	74,09	163	27.96